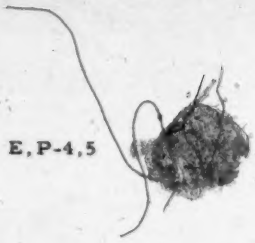

Sparrow: Male, Age 63

Background Data

*159 [156] [87] [101] [133] Sparrow's case is cited because of his position on the lowest rung of the local status hierarchy. He is known as a happy-go-lucky, worthless old drunk and is generally considered as "lacking a few of his marbles." However, Sparrow is seldom publicly disparaged, for local citizens simply pay little attention to him. He has a sixth grade education, gained at the Agency school. He has apparently never worked consistently at any job, and most of his work experience has been as a farm or ranch laborer. He is and has for years been totally dependent upon per capita income and the income from ranch lands owned by his mother, with whom he lives. Their affairs are managed by a local businessman who some years ago was appointed their guardian. He is the second eldest of four siblings. After his father's death forty years ago, his mother remarried and bore two other children. [58] [164] [191] He was married once when a young man, and after four years divorced his wife because of "her shiftless ways." He is a semi-invalid, the result of an accident years ago when a drunken brother drove over him with a truck, crushing his pelvis. He speaks fluent Klamath, the result of constant association with his aged mother who represents a direct link with the aboriginal Klamath past, as well as adequate English, learned in school.

[233] Much of Sparrow's time is spent in jail for drunkenness, in the local tavern, with one of the drinking cliques, or passed out in a doorway. When he is not totally drunk he spends much of his time with his mother, for whom he cares in his fashion. Occasionally he goes fishing in a nearby river. For at least twenty five years, this has been the pattern of his activities.

*159 154 Sparrow has many skills, among the most striking of which is the ability to "fly from here to the Agency without once touching the ground." There are several dimensions to this delusion, one of which is an association, in Sparrow's thinking, with the acquisition of power. When a young man he dreamed of acquiring the power to "rise up off the ground, like Jesus Christ." While such a belief may have aboriginal correlates, there are no Klamath today who would accept it as valid. Sparrow keeps this secret to himself, and relates it only to strangers and transients from whom he intends to borrow money. His other skills include the following: the ability to keep house and cook, harness making, leather working, painting, canning food (the notion involves laying in stores for the winter), tanning buckskin, wood carving, carpentry, poetry composition (in Klamath), arrowhead making, making traditional basketry, stock raising, restaurant management, and finally, the ability to bewitch rich old white ladies, who are captivated by him and who drive him about in their white Cadillacs. The latter may be associated with a recurrent dream of meeting with a white buffalo, also a symbol of power, but it is difficult to say, for there were never any buffalo near the Klamath, and it is more likely that he has got this idea from reading western stories. Needless to say, most of these skills are quite delusional also. There is no evidence for any of them being more than this. Relating one or more of these is Sparrow's single style of interacting with others, for in reaction to a question or another's anecdote he will sift about in his memory until he comes up with one of his capacities which seems relevant. Very frequently, the writer could not see where or how they were appropriate, but for Sparrow there seemed to be some connection. He relates these matter of factly, with only the most slight suggestion that they were self-enhancing, and no indication that he meant to justify himself, and will then coyly watch his listener to see if he is properly impressed. This behavior tends to merge with Sparrow's

Weasel: Male, Age 29

Background Data

In contrast to all other subjects Weasel's role in the reservation community is a totally negative, destructive one, largely that of a supposedly vicious criminal. He was born and raised on an economically un-productive ranch, which for twenty years or more has been the location of continuous drinking parties. Weasel was raised within a circle of a pack of older brothers, half-brothers, and step brothers, all of whom were bigger, stronger, and more capable than he. His father has been an alcoholic for thirty years and has rarely worked or contributed much to the organization of the family, which as a co-residential household usually included more than a dozen persons. In all, Weasel had 17 full and part siblings, half of whom are now deceased, three directly as a result of drinking, three from acts of violence or car accidents.

Weasel's formal education ceased when he was 15, in the ninth grade, at which time he was arrested on a burglary charge. Since then he has spent six years in reformatories or penal institutions. He was tested while in jail on an assault charge. Shortly thereafter he was found not-guilty, then re-arrested and sentenced on a different assault with a deadly weapon charge to three years in the state penitentiary.

Weasel has repeatedly moved out of the circle of the family group, only to fail "outside" and return to its sheltering arms. For a time Weasel was a professional boxer, but one without much skill or stamina. He never won a fight and his face shows the evidence of the capabilities of his opponents. His membership in this profession did not last long, and Weasel states, rather proudly, that the Boxing Commission expelled him "For conduct unbecoming a professional boxer." Weasel was once married (a common-law marriage, which for Weasel's primary reference groups is well sanctioned) but this lasted just 16 weeks. During this period Weasel stayed sober, the longest time he has spent without a drink since the age of 12. Weasel was consciously trying to reform himself, but now feels that he was a fool to ever try. Additionally, Weasel has repeatedly made a circuit of nearby towns and cities either singly or in the company of a brother or friend. These visitations have more of the character of raids than anything else, and Weasel is usually arrested in one or another place and either charged or shipped out of town.

In addition to being a minor criminal Weasel is frequently also the scapegoat for the aggressions of stronger men than he. He constantly asks for trouble, but has never given any evidence that he can back of his threats with appropriate force. His successful acts of aggression have always been sneak attacks, or attacks on feeble old men or young boys. He seldom attempts to avoid the consequences of these actions, and, indeed, is frequently not able to do so, because of his extreme drunken condition. He seems to obtain some gratification from the minor prestige afforded his performances in these roles, but this gratification is highly personalized and is not recognized as appropriate by others. It may be that he has been attempting to build up his standing and reputation within his own circle by acting out the role of a "dangerous Indian," but it would seem that he has been singularly unsuccessful in this. One aspect of this behavior is his reputed skill with a knife. On two occasions he wanted to obtain vocational training, once as a barber, the other time as a butcher, both times implying that this would be a simple extension of his native talent.

Grandma Williams: Female, Age 67

Background Data

*159 156 Understandably, it is difficult to find a match for a person like Weasel, particularly in the instance of a woman who occupies a similar status. The few [598] Klamath women who were like Weasel were not available for testing. Grandma William's position is that of the mother of a large, disorganized nuclear family *733 like Weasel's, one marked by excessive drinking, violence, and promiscuity. [83] She is a vigorous, hearty, earthy old woman who has borne eight children by [589] three husbands. She is once divorced and twice widowed, her first husband [871] having died after three years of marriage, her third after thirty-five. She [178] completed six years of school, all that was available when she was a girl, and she has lived and visited for extended periods in Washington state, Missouri, California, and Mexico.

[651] Grandma William's mother was a traditional Klamath wife and mother, and her father [464] for years an Agency Indian policeman. In her words, both her family of orientation and her family of procreation have had "bad luck." This bad luck consists of numerous bouts with the law over acts of violence. Her father died in the Federal penitentiary where he was serving a life sentence for murder. Several of her sons have killed men in the past. One is reputed to have killed at least five, and he is now in a State institution. Her other children are noted for their violence, and local informants say of Grandma that they cannot understand how such "a wonderful, good old lady managed to produce so many worthless children." [577] Few feel that she deserves such a fate. Community acceptance of Grandma Williams [177] is based upon several attributes, her steady, hard work, her commitment to raising a family, her devoutly Christian behavior, her espousal of dominant White values, and, especially, her hearty good humor. She has never accepted the guilt of either her father or her sons, maintains that they were falsely accused, and has worked steadily to secure her one son's pardon.

[41] Grandma Williams was raised in a Klamath speaking household and acquired her [871] English in school. She is very proud of her education and maintains that chil- [593] dren today are not so well tutored in the 3 Rs as she was. She claims that "I [603] can just about out-spell, out-write, and out-figure all of my kids." This is by [867] no means the only aggressive, competitive attitude she maintains towards her children, none of whom have ever quite lived up to her standards. In this respect, Clifton was once able to witness her training a grandson, who was an alert, spontaneous, active lad. The boy was made to be too polite and too formal, behaviors in keeping perhaps with urban middle-class society, but very much out of place on the reservation. All of her sons have maintained their main affiliations with the local "cowboy" culture, but they are ridiculed for their efforts at riding and calf roping because of their obesity and clumsyness, none of them coming near, in physical type, to the slim hipped, pencil shaped cowboy ideal. [657] She is an excellent example of a woman who, early in the reservation period, was [871] carefully tutored by conscientious minister-teachers in inappropriate behaviors [177] and values, and who has attempted to transmit these to her children. It would seem that she has produced over-trained, and mis-trained, hostile children, who promptly discovered that regardless of their veneer of "culture" they were rejected from many local circles because of their Indianness.

*159 Grandma is a direct, forceful person, another Klamath woman with a sharp wit
157 (yet a less personal one than Aunt May's). She is quick to initiate inter-
156 changes and to attempt to knit together a strained situation. Yet her responses

Fidel: Male, Age 19

Background Data

*159 156 [461] [891] [592] [434] [659] Fidel's case is that of a young man in the process of separating himself from his family, yet without any clear sense of where he wants to go. He has never worked at any job, although he quit school in the 10th grade, when he was sixteen. Except for 8 months residence in the San Francisco area with his family, and five school years spent in a Catholic boarding school, he has never lived away from the reservation. He is the third eldest of six children. He presently lives at home, if the household which contains himself, his parents, and his younger siblings may be called that. As an unmarried minor approaching maturity, his tribal income is administered by a trust officer who allocates to Fidel $110.00 monthly for spending money. Additionally, Fidel sends bills for various expenses to the bank, which pays them. These arrangements have been in force for three years.

*733 [582] [648] [221] Fidel's mother is a somewhat confused, defeated, semi-alcoholic who is very reserved when sober and gay and promiscuous when drunk. His father is a Skagit Indian who has for years been steadily employed as a cat skinner for a logging company, which work keeps him away from home for months at a time. During the logging slack season, his father is only occasionally at home. He is usually away hunting or fishing. When he is at home he is frequently drunk, and when drunk characteristically assaults his wife and berates his children. The father does not contribute to the income, the up-keep, or the conduct of household affairs. [593] In recent years Fidel has defended his mother and the children from his father, on several occasions has driven him from the house, and on one occasion knocked him cold with a rifle butt. There is some doubt as to whether this person is actually Fidel's father, the doubt being due to his mother's promiscuity, [848] which is of long standing, and to Fidel's almost total rejection of him. Fidel's *159 relations with his father illustrate his marked and extensive ambivalence towards 156 most personal relationships. He will call him or refer to him as "father" or 593 "dad" and in the next breath "uncle," at one moment praise his skill at hunting, and the next deride him. Fidel cannot fully accept any relationship; he exhibits the same ambivalence towards his mother, his siblings, his closest friends, girls, and so on. Moreover, Fidel cannot undertake any course of action without doubt and reservations. He can neither love nor hate fully.

[421] Fidel's family life is marked by a complete lack of cohesion, cooperation, common activity, and common property. The major shared sentiment is an indifference to one another. Each member occupies a part of the house where he keeps his belongings, and these are rarely shared. For example, Clifton once needed a rifle for a hunting trip. It was borrowed directly from the father; Fidel could not borrow it for him. A major source of difficulty is intra-family theft, which engenders violent reactions. The mother is psychologically divorced from the father, and strongly oriented towards her eldest, married daughter with whom she spends much time.

*159 156 [673] [512] Fidel thinks of himself as a guide and skillful hunter, insofar as he thinks of himself as anything. On several occasions he has been in trouble with the law, usually for drag racing or drinking when a minor. He spends his time loafing about, watching TV, playing pool, fishing, hunting, visiting with his buddies, and sleeping. He is seldom in bed before 1 AM, and equally seldom awake before two or three PM. His main ambition is to get out of the area, away from his family, and off by himself. He has thought about studying art, which may result from an identification with a friend who is doing so.